



Cultural Overlay District Advisory Committee

MEETING SUMMARY: PARTNERSHIPS SUBCOMMITTEE, February 27, 2009

Subcommittee members present: Jerry Everard, Fidelma McGinn, Michael Seiwerath, Paige Weinheimer.

City of Seattle attendees: Chris Godwin (City Council central staff), Michael Killoran (Mayor's Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs).

Guests: James Kebblas, Office of Film and Music; Eddie Hill

Consultant staff: Dennis Sellin

1. Guest presenter

The meeting began at 11:00 am.

James Kebblas, from the City of Seattle Office of Film and Music, presented information about the Seattle City of Music project, which he heads. The program, which is a twelve-year plan to "grow" music in Seattle, came about in 2007, and was partially a response to Seattle's failure to leverage its success as a filmmaking venue in the 1980s and 1990s.

Taking a lesson from that experience, the City's Office of Film and Music convened 25 people representing various facets of the music industry such as record labels and musicians, but also including Amazon, Microsoft, and Real Networks, which represent the technology quarter of the industry.

The newly formed committee acknowledged that Seattle has become a music town, but largely by accident. The group's purpose then was to drive its own destiny, and foster the growth of music in Seattle.

The committee examined other cities in the music business, assessed Seattle's strengths and weaknesses in comparison, and ultimately created a vision with three core components:

- Create a city of musicians.
- Create a city of live music.
- Create a city of music business.

Today, music is as good as it has ever been in Seattle. With all of the businesses related to music here, the future of music is also here in Seattle. The next step was to build momentum around that vision and that reality.

A twelve-year plan to realize the vision was developed, done by the committee, also with a check-in and buy-in process with other stakeholders, likely (opera, symphony, corporations, community) and unlikely (Port of Seattle, chamber of commerce).

Following development of the plan, and presentation to the mayor, meetings were held with each department head within city government. The intention was to familiarize them with the City of Music program, and to see what contributions each department could make to the program, and how City of Music could integrate with other programs.

Following buy-in at these various community, business, and government levels, the program was officially launched in October 2008.

The committee then began the work of focusing on its first priority actions: to encourage live music, and to seek tax incentives that would benefit live music in Seattle.

Two other things were done by City of Music: benchmarks were established, and a commission was formed. The benchmarks will assess where Seattle is right now with music, so that an evaluation of progress can be assessed over time; and the mayor's music commission will have a twelve-year life, in order to oversee the carrying out of the program's twelve-year plan.

Thus, a long-term initiative such as this enables the program to do small things today, one of which is to hold an annual "City of Music" event with live performances, a music technology conference, a pop convention, and a music festival.

In terms of congruence with CODAC, the City of Music creates a context for political support, and provides a gateway to the entire cultural community.

2. Questions and discussion

Comment: this relates to buildings and venues, which is a big concern for CODAC.

Kebblas response: through recognition by City government of our role, we have gotten departments, such as Planning and Development (DPD), to allow the use of unconventional spaces for venues. However, one area in which the City cannot compromise is public safety.

It is a good idea to consider some of the logistics of arts and cultural space where help is needed, such as parking, and loading of equipment.

Question: more information on incentives.

Kebblas response: Venues no longer have to pay the 5% admission tax (as of July 1). There is a 20% rebate on B&O tax for using local music and musicians.

Comment: difference between your program and our effort is that you are pro-active, and we are reactive.

Kebblas: It is important to remember that no new money was created for this City-sponsored initiative. We try to think creatively of things that we can do that do not cost the City money.

Comment: having emerged from the Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce, when is it appropriate for us to go to the mayor for his buy-in?

Response from Michael Killoran: The City of Seattle has been working for several years to secure cultural space. Every major non-profit cultural organization has had support from the City.

Right now, city government priorities are: affordable housing, open space, and transit-oriented development.

There are therefore two approaches that CODAC could take. The first is policy. Example: DPD has been chipping away at code issues related to arts and music for a long time, but there has been no concerted effort to overhaul the entire code.

The second is project-focused: identify a district, a site or building, and tools to create space. There are opportunities for transitional buildings, for example.

Kebblas: Since your champions are city council members, I would get those council members to brief and engage the mayor.

Comment: You have constructed an interlocking support system, which keeps it from being undercut or unfunded. This coincides with our thinking as well.

Comment: CODAC is not an omnibus effort, and it is proactive.

Question: How do you hold equity?

Kebblas response: By providing access to capital: ways to get money that people can afford to pay back. There is also the challenge of language and identity, which I am sure exists in the arts as well, of training cultural organizations how to think like a business. Our measures of success are going to be quite different from other departments in city government.

Question: Is the City of Music a mayoral priority? A branding effort?

Kebblas response: Both.

Comment: You have executive ability because you are housed within the office of the mayor. We are a loose alliance of stakeholders.

Kebblas response: Your committee should frame itself by considering who is responsible for what, and include the City as one of several partners. Also, do not be afraid to consider unlikely partners, Trader Joe's, for example.

Final comment: CODAC should ask DPD to save one of its positions for the cultural liaison/advocate.

3. Other discussion

Eddie Hill, an urban planner, spoke about his experience working in the Central District. In the Yesler corridor, there is a long-range strategy planning group with the goal of retaining community character. By working with CODAC, he can broaden his group's reach, and tie in with upcoming neighborhood planning efforts.

CODAC members will continue to seek general support from institutions, organizations, and agencies.

To keep in mind:

- The status of the Sand Point development.
- The National Trust's Green Lab (Seattle as pilot city).
- CityClub's March 13 meeting: "Tough Times in the Livable City" [CityClub's Livable City event](#)

The next CODAC meeting will be held at 11:00 am on March 13 at the Capitol Hill library.